Familiar in Another Skin

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Familiar in Another Skin

by Dreamy__Archangel

Summary

What if Hamato Yoshi had been the one who died in the fire? What if Tang Shen had survived, if she had been the one who bought those four turtles at that pet store that day in 1997?

Chapter 1: A lonely cat and her "kittens"

Chapter Notes

Okay, before we begin, I think it would be helpful to explain what this is all about:

This fanfic was born from the chapter "The Pulverizer Returns!," specifically from when the turtles have to switch weapons, and my brain literally said:

"What if I change their personalities too?"

And so, to spice things up, I decided to do a complete Swap AU 🤌🏽

Technically, I'll be posting rewrites of some chapters here with these changes. I'm not promising a specific order for each chapter or season. Some will even be random ideas and things that pop into my head.

Also, just a quick reminder that English isn't my first language, so any corrections are welcome!

Anyway, I hope you enjoy it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"And this little friend here is the oldest of the four; he hatched first."

The girl on the other side of the counter spoke cheerfully, proudly holding the small, fern-green turtle.

The atmosphere in the pet shop was quite pleasant; a cat meowed, some puppies barked and stood on their hind legs as people passed by, hoping to be adopted, parrots squawked and moved restlessly in their cages, and people came and went.

She listened attentively to the girl's explanation, a smile on her face, nodding at each detail. Every now and then, she glanced down at the counter, where four little turtles were inside a small tank.

She waited for the girl to finish explaining before paying, lifting the tank and murmuring a soft apology when the little animals startled at the sudden movement.

The pet store door closed behind her with the characteristic *ding* of the bell, and the summer breeze hit her face.

She pulled the tank close to her chest and started walking along the sidewalk. Her gaze occasionally drifted down to the four turtles, who now stood still, observing their new

surroundings through the glass of the tank.

A giggle escaped her lips. She was delighted with her new little friends who would keep her company.

Tang Shen, that was her name. She was a young Japanese woman who had migrated from Japan to the United States due to personal *problems*. She had only been in the country for four months and had settled in New York for one.

Life in her new apartment was too lonely, so she decided to find some companionship. And what better way than getting a pet?

At first, her goal had been to buy just *one* animal, and she'd been delighted by the turtles in the store. Her plan had remained to get only one, but the saleswoman's explanation that the four were siblings made her feel the need to buy them all so she wouldn't have to separate them.

She wrinkled her nose in amusement when, as she stopped at a traffic light and glanced down at the tank again, one of the little turtles started *"playing"* with another. Could that really be considered play? Did baby turtles play with each other? She hadn't the slightest clue, but she knew that as soon as she got home, she was going to investigate everything she needed to know.

She crossed the street cautiously, keeping her eyes straight ahead while humming a tune whose lyrics she'd already forgotten most of.

Her walk was going smoothly and comfortably until, without warning, she felt a man bump into her shoulder. She squealed, tightening her grip on the tank and trying to regain her balance, her brow furrowing.

How rude, she thought, looking at the man who was walking along as if nothing had happened. Not even an "excuse me, ma'am" or a "move aside," nothing. A total turn-off.

She huffed, rolling her eyes and deciding to continue on her way, and she would have, if she hadn't felt curious to see where the man was going, especially since he wasn't looking to either side and his movements were so stiff, almost *robotic*.

She did her best to avoid appearing to be following him—*although technically she was, but no one had to know*—and kept a distance she considered prudent, until she finally saw the man turn into an alley.

She frowned. Okay, that was completely suspicious now.

She narrowed her eyes, glancing down at the four little turtles, who were also looking in the same direction—or so she assumed. Tang Shen raised an eyebrow, lifting the tank and tilting her head slightly.

"What do you say, kids? Shall we follow him?" she asked with complete seriousness, smiling slightly when she heard a series of chirps from her pets.

She chuckled, taking that as an affirmation.

She turned carefully toward the alley, walking cautiously. She peered in warily, feeling a strange unease as she saw the man now meeting with another—*who, incidentally, was identical. They could easily be mistaken for twins*—but what caught Tang Shen's attention most was what they were exchanging.

A strange, shiny container filled with an odd substance; a bright green with a texture that, at first glance, appeared viscous.

A feeling of alertness and danger washed over her, along with the clear thought that *she shouldn't be seeing this*. She nervously stepped back, jumping at the sound of a meow.

She ducked her head, watching a cat dart away, its tail fluffed as it spat at her. She gasped, wincing as she realized she had stepped on it.

She mumbled a quick apology, feeling her stomach lurch when a hand landed on her shoulder. *Ah, right, the men*, she thought, turning toward them.

The two of them were surrounding her, their faces expressionless but exuding an aura of danger. Tang Shen stepped back again, quickly dodging a blow one of the men aimed at her.

So that's what they wanted. Oh, well, it's a good thing she had insisted so much that her husband teach her self-defense and ninjutsu.

Tang Shen had no choice but to defend herself, holding the turtle tank with one hand and attacking with the other. It was clear she was at a disadvantage, but that wasn't going to stop her.

She was too caught up in the fight to notice the moment the tank slipped from one of her attackers' hands, and it wasn't until she felt the liquid inside soak her that she realized what was happening.

The liquid *burned* her, an indescribable pain erupting. She felt a tug in each of her limbs and screamed, dropping the tank, which shattered as soon as it hit the ground. The turtles slid out, also filled with the same liquid and moving restlessly, squealing in pain.

Tang Shen moved forward with trembling steps, her vision beginning to blur, and she could feel as if her skin were melting. She stretched out her hand, gasping and moaning; she could see through the pain as the two men fled, leaving her there in her agony.

[. . .]

Strangely, no one came to see her, and no one found her.

Tang Shen awoke disoriented hours later, her limbs feeling heavy and her body *unnatural*. The black, starry sky was the first thing she saw, the darkness of the alley looming over her.

She sat up slowly, groaning as a sharp pain shot through her skull. She blinked, confused.

She looked around, and, surprisingly, she could see perfectly clearly despite the lack of light. That must have been the first warning sign.

She turned abruptly when she heard a soft cry beside her.

Cry?

She moved clumsily, ignoring the extra weight she could feel on her hip and the tugging sensation on the top of her head. She carefully moved some nearby bags, stopping abruptly when she saw them.

There were four babies. But they weren't normal babies, strange babies. They looked like babies, but they were turtles, a bizarre and unnatural combination.

Tang Shen gasped. ***What kind of aberration of nature was this?***

The four were crying, moving restlessly and obviously confused. Tang Shen blinked, feeling horror creep in as she realized these were *her* turtles, the four she had bought at the turtle shop.

She blinked, looking at them one by one.

Fern green, dark green, brownish green, and yellowish green. The same shades of green the saleswoman had explained and told her to use to tell the four apart.

She gasped, bringing a paw to her mouth and—

…Wait a minute.

Paw?

She looked down, a genuine scream of terror escaping her throat as she realized her hands had transformed into two cat paws, two paws with fully functional toes.

She felt herself begin to hyperventilate, clutching her hands (paws) to her head, feeling panic grip her even more as she realized she now had two cat ears on her head.

"This has to be a joke, a horrible joke," she shrieked, shaking her head repeatedly as she tried to stand.

What the hell was in that jar?!

She gasped for air, running a hand—*a paw*—across her face. Tears stung her eyes, and a sob caught in her throat.

Why her? Why her out of all people? Hadn't the universe done enough by taking her husband and daughter and forcing her to leave her homeland?

She hiccuped, turning her gaze to the four turtles still crying, lying on the ground. They looked just as confused and frightened as she did, their small eyes reflecting a desperation that made her chest ache strangely.

She closed her eyes, falling to her knees and hugging herself. She took a breath, sighing shakily and feeling the sobs begin to shake her.

This had to be some kind of ***sick*** joke.

Chapter End Notes

Oh, yes, I got the shades of green I used from the TMNTPedia, and yes, I know that even if you look some up, they won't exactly match the skin tone of each turtle, but oh well, it's something, haha.

I hope you liked it! ☺

Chapter 2: New beginnings

Throughout her life, Tang Shen had made countless plans for herself and her future.

She had as many as her reliable *"Plan A"* and the necessary *"Plan B."* She liked to have things in order in her life, to feel prepared for whatever might come.

The first time something in her life took a turn for which she hadn't planned was when she lost her husband and daughter in that fire in Japan. She knew that Yoshi's brother, Saki, also had feelings for her; she knew he was jealous, but she never thought he would be capable of doing *that*.

And yet, despite the shock and the pain, she tried to move on, to keep going and find a new direction in her life, making new plans. When she moved to the United States, she only thought about moving forward and leaving the past behind, of course, keeping the memory of her late husband and daughter alive.

But what had happened to her two days ago? Oh, she wasn't sure if she could find a way out of that. Or if she could create any plan to move forward.

Night was falling over New York. Tang Shen climbed the building's fire escape, watching her step. The apartment windows reflected her current appearance; the lights off and the curtains drawn allowed her reflection to shimmer in the faint moonlight.

The reflection of her current self greeted her. Almost mocking her. Tang Shen had to stop for a moment, her feet—*her hind legs*—leaving her halfway up the stairs. She gripped the railing tightly, pressing her lips together.

She didn't recognize herself. It didn't matter how much she looked in the reflection, how much she squinted, how close she got and touched her face. She didn't recognize herself; she simply couldn't see herself. Her entire mind refused to accept that this was how she looked now.

A freak, a monster, something strange. ***A mutant.***

If she was honest, she never thought something like this could be possible. He believed that the whole thing about people turning into monsters and creatures was just science fiction, a concept that had remained solely in the entertainment and movies that Yoshi liked to watch in his lifetime.

Her tail twitched involuntarily behind her, restless at the memory of her late husband. Yoshi, another one who had once applauded her ability to be ready for almost anything and her plans.

She held her breath, her ears drooping as she felt her stomach twist.

If he were still alive, would he recognize her looking like this? *Would he still love her*, even?

She bit her tongue hard, so hard that she tasted the characteristic metallic tang of blood. She instinctively lowered her head, closing her eyes and taking a breath.

"Don't think about it now, Tang Shen. There's no time to dwell on the past; focus on the present and moving forward," her subconscious told her, that little voice in her head that always knew what to say and was always right.

She lifted her head, opening her eyes and nodding to herself. Yes, she certainly didn't need to lament what had happened; she should just think about how she was going to get through this, **about moving forward.**

~~*Although deep down she wished she could make everything go back to the way it was.*~~

She hurried on her way, still holding onto the railing. She took a step back, using it to push off before continuing up the building's fire escape.

She paused for a moment on the rooftop before continuing, carefully pulling on her kimono—*one of the few garments she still had*—when it caught on a protruding nail.

The silvery moonlight bathed her; she couldn't see herself, but she was sure her fur must be shimmering. She walked carefully across the rooftop, her hands instinctively reaching for the backpack on her back.

She continued walking until she stopped in front of an abandoned water tower. She had found it yesterday, after rummaging through her apartment and taking the things she thought she needed.

She advanced cautiously until she was close enough to the tower to make out the patterns in the old wood. She glanced around carefully, wanting to make sure no one was nearby, before reaching out and lifting a loose board.

The entrance was small, but Tang Shen could easily squeeze in. She wanted to believe it was due to the strange nature of cats: if their whiskers fit, the rest of their body followed.

The interior was shrouded in darkness, the sounds of the outside world muffled. Tang Shen returned the board to its place, dropping the backpack to the floor with a thud.

Almost automatically, babbling and cooing filled the small tower. Tang Shen sighed, bending down to pick up a flashlight she had left there. She turned it on, positioning it to illuminate the entire interior.

The babbling became even more insistent.

"Yes, yes. Hello, little turtles," her voice came out softly, with a hint of affection.

In a box tucked away in the corner, Tang Shen could see four pairs of tiny hands moving insistently. Babbling was coming from there, babbling that soon turned into soft whimpers.

She walked carefully toward the box, keeping a slight pace. She gently dropped to her knees in front of it, extending her arms as she began to hum softly.

Four baby turtles gazed at her expectantly: fern green, dark green, brownish-green, and yellowish-green. Four shades, four little turtles, four mutant babies.

Tang Shen held her breath as she gently lifted the dark green turtle, which had begun to cry.

She cradled it close to her chest, her maternal instinct kicking in naturally. Memories of when she still lived in Japan with her husband and daughter flooded back; she was no stranger to caring for babies, having already experienced it with her late baby, Miwa.

What was new to her was having to take care of four babies, and not ordinary babies, but baby turtles.

But she wanted to believe she would get used to it in time.

The other three little turtles watched her expectantly. The fern-green one had already sat down, extending its hands as if it also wanted to be picked up. Meanwhile, the brownish-green one had already started to bother the yellowish-green one a little.

A heavy sigh escaped her lips as she leaned back against the tower wall and slid down until she was sitting on the ground. Tang Shen looked down at the baby turtle in her arms, who had already calmed down.

They must be hungry, she thought, bending down to return the little one to its siblings and walking toward the backpack she had brought with her.

While outside the noise and chaos of New York City spilled through the streets, in that tower the only sounds were joyful babbles and the characteristic noise of babies eating.

The feeling that everything was wrong still lingered in Tang Shen. Her urge to burst into tears for having lost her old life and ending up like this was still there. The feeling of being lost and out of control was still there.

But there was also warmth. *Small*, but it was there too.

And as she gently wiped the corner of the little fern-green turtle's lips, she remembered what her subconscious had said: *"Focus on the present and keep moving forward."*

Yes... She could do that.

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